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# EXEMPLARISM IN MORAL EDUCATION: PROBLEMS WITH APPLICABILITY AND INDOCTRINATION

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**Abstract.** This paper introduces an account of moral education grounded in Zagzebski's recent *Exemplarist Moral Theory* and discusses two problems that have to be solved for the account to become a realistic alternative to other educational models on the market, namely the limited-applicability problem and the problem of indoctrination. The first problem raises worries about the viability of the account in ordinary circumstances. The second charges the proposed educational model with indoctrinating students. The main goal of this paper is to show how an exemplar-based account of moral education can handle both problems without compromising its structure and upshot.

In her recent *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, Linda Zagzebski puts forth a moral theory that explicitly aims at being practically useful in education designed to make people moral. She can set this goal for the theory because it is built around something all human beings should in principle know and be able to experience, namely the emotion of admiration (2017: 3). In this paper, I introduce an account of moral education grounded in Zagzebski's view and discuss two problems that have to be solved for the account to become a realistic alternative to other educational models on the market. The first issue can be called the *limited-applicability problem*, as it raises a concern about the viability of the account in ordinary circumstances. The second is the *problem of indoctrination*, namely a general worry about every account of moral education concerning whether their educational strategies turn out to indoctrinate students. The main goal of this paper is to show how an exemplar-based account of moral education can handle both problems without compromising its structure and upshot. Thus, after showing in section 1 how we can derive the basics of an educational model from Zagzebski's exemplarist theory, in section 2 I shall discuss the limited-applicability problem. Section 3 is devoted to explaining how an exemplarist educational model can respond to the problem of indoctrination.

## 1. FROM EXEMPLARIST MORAL THEORY TO AN EXEMPLAR-BASED ACCOUNT OF MORAL EDUCATION

Zagzebski's exemplarist moral theory—henceforth, EMT—is a foundationalist theory of a unique kind, in that its foundation does not lie in a concept but in particular individuals we admire because of their moral exemplarity. Applying the theory of direct reference proposed by Hilary Putnam and Saul Kripke to the moral domain, Zagzebski identifies moral exemplars by direct reference to persons *like that*, namely individuals whom we admire upon reflection and we identify indexically by pointing to them. The identification of moral exemplars via direct reference allows Zagzebski to provide definitions of the

fundamental moral terms. For example, ‘a *virtue* is a trait we admire in an exemplar’ and ‘a *duty* in some set of circumstances C is an act an exemplar demands from both herself and others’ (21).<sup>i</sup>

In her view, an important advantage of such an approach is that it avoids opening the doors to common forms of scepticism about the concepts grounding the theory, as happens, for example, with the concept of eudaimonia in neo-Aristotelian theories or with the concept of the good will in Kantian theories. EMT is still more appealing because it better suits the natural way we approach the realm of morality, where we usually are more certain someone is admirable ‘than we are of *what* is admirable about them’ (2017: 10).

Despite Zagzebski’s remarks about the educational advantages of her theory, EMT does not include an exemplar-based account of moral education. Thus, in the rest of this section I shall develop a tool that grants the applicability of this theory to the educational domain, which I call the *exemplarist dynamic*, i.e. a process of moral development based on the admiration and imitation of moral exemplars according to the principles of EMT. For the sake of clarity, we can individuate three main stages in this dynamic: *admiration*, *conscientious reflection*, and *emulation*.

As regards the first stage, the emotion of admiration should naturally arise before morally exemplary individuals and have the capacity to motivate the subject—that is, to lead them to act in some way—where the resulting action could range from a simple change of attitude towards the exemplar and the object of their deeds to a concrete imitation of their behaviour. Needless to say, Zagzebski is aware that things may go wrong in this stage as a result of the fallibility of admiration, as with any other emotion. But if this is the case, why should we trust our emotional dispositions? And how can we do that?

The stage of conscientious reflection helps us address these worries. Zagzebski holds that it is ‘both inescapable and rational’ to naturally self-trust our emotion dispositions (44). It is inescapable because without self-trust in our emotion dispositions, we have no way to figure out whether they tend to produce fitting emotions—that is, emotions appropriately directed towards their intentional object (e.g., fear of a dangerous storm rather than of an innocuous pigeon). It is rational because in the face of the fallibility of our emotion dispositions, the best way to find out whether our admiration towards someone is fitting is to conscientiously reflect on the appropriateness of this emotion—that is, to determine whether our admiration for them survives reflection over time.<sup>ii</sup>

When admiration of a moral exemplar naturally motivates us to act and our conscientious reflection reassures us about the rationality of our emotion dispositions, we thereby acquire justification for emulating the exemplar—that is, the third stage in the exemplarist dynamic. In Zagzebski’s vocabulary, emulating an exemplar amounts to imitating not only their deeds, but also their motive for acting as they do. Thus, emulating the exemplar is a promising way to acquire or strengthen a virtue, for it allows us to form a *habitus*—that is, to respond to morally relevant situations as an exemplar would do. Emulation does not require that one necessarily replicate an exemplar’s actions, for there might well be cases in which their deeds are well beyond our reach. Rather, emulation involves being able to adopt an exemplar’s *attitude* in the situations one finds themselves in, no matter whether they involve decisions with high impact on many people or actions with more limited consequences.

This brief reconstruction of the exemplarist dynamic makes it possible to propose an exemplar-based account of moral education. The following principles constitute the essential nodes of the account, which have been adapted from Croce and Vaccarezza (2017: 5):

- (i) Human *flourishing* is the main aim of moral education, and the acquisition of the *virtues* is a necessary condition of flourishing (Kristjánsson 2015: 14);
- (ii) Emulation of moral exemplars is the main way to achieve these aims;
- (iii) Emulation as a means of education requires the educator (a) to elicit the children's *admiration* via presenting them with genuinely good and imitable models, and (b) to foster the children's capacity for *reflection* upon *prima facie* admiration.

Thesis (i) shows that the account is grounded on a combination of moral exemplarism and Aristotelian character education, where priority is assigned to aretaic notions over deontic ones (Steutel and Carr 1999: 7). It is worth noting that possessing the virtues is not sufficient for flourishing, in that achieving the ultimate aim of moral education also depends on further elements such as 'good friends, family, health, basic material provisions, satisfactory education, and substantial supplies of "moral luck" to thrive' (Kristjánsson 2015: 25). Thesis (ii) illustrates the strategy through which exemplarists attempt to achieve the goal of moral education, thereby accounting for the stage of emulation in the exemplarist dynamic. Thesis (iii) sheds light on the role of the educator within an exemplarist perspective, thereby accounting for the other stages of the dynamic.

Having clarified how an exemplar-based account of moral education might look, it is important to assess its applicability in a classroom setting. In the next section, I aim to do so by addressing the limited-applicability problem.

## 2. THE LIMITED-APPLICABILITY PROBLEM

In a recent paper on the intellectual virtue formation in the classroom, Steven Porter argues that the standard approach to virtue formation deploys several strategies to educate children to virtue, among which we list '(1) direct instruction on the nature and the importance of the virtues; (2) exposure to exemplars of the virtue; (3) practice of virtuous behaviours' (2016: 222). Tanesini has raised concerns about the applicability of this approach in specific circumstances within the classroom. If an exemplar-based account of moral education is part of the standard approach to virtue formation, the account might be charged with the same worries. Before assessing whether this is the case, let us briefly explain how these strategies are supposed to work.

Direct instruction amounts to providing children with a basic vocabulary for character terms—namely, what the virtues are, why they are valuable, and what allows one to distinguish one virtue from the others. This strategy constitutes the most controversial way to foster virtue formation because, in a heavy form, it could inculcate children with moral values without providing them with the capacity to rationally assess the values proposed

and with the open-mindedness required to question them. Exposure to virtuous exemplars is meant to show the children the virtues in action and allows them to take part in the exemplarist dynamic, as EMT clarifies. Finally, practicing virtuous behaviours is a delicate step, in that an educator is required to foster the rise of circumstances that habituate the children to deploying their virtuous dispositions, and thus to facilitate their emotional and active response to the situations without forcing them to act as a virtuous person would do.

These concise remarks about the above strategies should suffice to explain that an exemplar-based account of moral education fits the standard approach to virtue formation. In fact, it is not necessary that these strategies be deployed in a specific order or proportion for an educational model to be part of the standard approach. Jason Baehr, for instance, considers exposure to exemplars as a subcomponent of direct instruction (see 2015: 308) yet confers on it a relevant role because it constitutes the most straightforward way to acquaint children with the virtues.<sup>iii</sup> In contrast, exemplarists give a prime role to virtuous exemplars, through which the admiration-reflection-emulation dynamic activates, thereby allowing children to improve their understanding of moral concepts and develop virtuous habits. In this account, the other strategies work as *auxiliary strategies*, in that they support the exemplarist process by fulfilling a function the dynamic is not in itself suitable to perform.

In particular, in a plausible classroom setting—namely, one that has already been tested in primary schools<sup>iv</sup>—young students are presented with exemplary stories and are given the opportunity to work together on understanding the stories’ meaning and implications for their own lives. Within this framework, direct instruction merely provides the children with basic vocabulary about the character traits they could find in the exemplars under consideration. It is important that the exemplar-based model makes minimal use of this strategy, for this way it reduces the risks of being accused of being indoctrinatory. Practicing virtuous behaviour is key to an exemplarist educational process in that it supports the stage of emulation by providing suitable opportunities for the students to exercise the virtues within the school setting. There is no official handbook for how to create these opportunities. Rather, the exemplarist account is compatible with several available options for the students to imitate an exemplar’s behaviour. These include small-group activities within the classroom aimed at creating apt conditions for the students to exercise some virtues (Baehr 2015: 379), educative dialogues in the class (Kristjánsson 2015: §7), and opportunities for building character in the assignments (Carr and Harrison 2015: 130–33).

The limited-applicability problem, as we consider it here following Tanesini’s considerations (2016), pinpoints a general limitation of the standard strategies, namely that they only apply to those circumstances in which the students lack nonvirtuous attitudes (2016: 524). In particular, she argues that exposure to exemplars works only with children already disposed to be emotionally moved by exemplary stories and to be motivated to emulate an exemplar’s behaviour (525). In contrast, this strategy would be detrimental for children who ‘possess a defensive self-esteem and thus are predisposed toward haughtiness and arrogance’ (525) and those who ‘suffer from self-abasing and obsequious tendencies’ (526). The former would overestimate the traits they think they have in common with the exemplar and would disregard what separates them from the exemplar, thereby deluding

themselves into thinking they are closer to virtue than in fact they are. For the latter, encountering a virtuous exemplar would amount to further evidence that they are too far away from achieving the virtues, thereby strengthening their negative self-assessment.

It is worth pointing out that Tanesini's objection is meant to address education for intellectual virtues more than moral virtues. This remark helps us explain why she suggests that a promising approach to dealing with such children amounts to self-affirmation techniques involving exercises through which they can reflect on the attributes that define them. For these techniques could reduce 'the defensiveness of the arrogant and enhance the explicit self-esteem of the self-abased' (526). Evidently, the objection applies to the domain of moral education too, for the effect of exposing the aforementioned categories of students to exemplars is the same even when the exemplars in questions are morally rather than intellectually virtuous.

Proponents of an exemplar-based educational model might take Tanesini's point and emphasize that their view need not exclude self-affirmation techniques as an auxiliary strategy to be deployed with arrogant or self-abasing children. Yet whenever children lack tendencies to vices, exposing them to moral exemplars is likely to be more fruitful as an educational method since it can create an opportunity for many students to undertake a process of virtue formation at the same time through the admiration-reflection-imitation dynamic. On careful look, exemplarists can do more. Following Zagzebski (2017: 25), they can refine their educational approach by arguing that exemplarism can be effective insofar as the virtuous model an educator proposes to the children fits the stage of moral development they are at. In particular, Han et al. have shown that "stories of attainable and relevant moral exemplars [...] more effectively promoted students' service engagement" (2017:11) compared with those of historic models. *Attainable* exemplars provide the students with the perception that they can emulate the model without excessive effort, while *relevant* exemplars belong to the students' environment (e.g., family, school, sports team, or community), thereby exercising their virtues in situations familiar to the children.

One might think the proposed kinds of exemplars go against the spirit of an exemplarist approach, which should focus on authentically exceptional figures. However, since the exemplarist dynamic purports to allow us to imitate moral exemplars, as principle (ii) suggests, it becomes crucial to ensure that the proposed models elicit not only our admiration, but also the desire to emulate their behaviour, as suggested by (iii). Attainable and relevant models may well fall within the set of moral exemplars an exemplarist educational account can deploy, for they fare morally better than we do, but in such a way that we do not lose the perception that we can imitate them, and the desire to do so.

How can attainable and relevant models help the exemplarist address Tanesini's objection? I shall contend that interacting with these exemplars can have positive consequences on both arrogant and self-abased students. In both cases, the possibility for the exemplarist to propose a convincing strategy requires a tailored approach, in that the teacher might have to choose different exemplars as suitable for different students. This complicates the educational model from a practical standpoint, but it does not undermine its plausibility and feasibility.

As regards arrogant students, the most promising situation would be one in which the student shares some trait with a virtuous exemplar who also displays humility. In this case,

though arrogance leads the child to think of themselves as similar to the exemplar, it would be possible for them to notice that in several ordinary circumstances the exemplar adopts humble behaviours, that is, acts differently than the child would do. The more relevant an humble exemplar is to the child—i.e., the closer they are to a student’s daily life—the easier it is that the child experiences some dissonance between what they think they share with an exemplar and the model’s actual behaviour. In contrast, it is likely that the student would not be moved by a humble exemplar encountered through a narrative, in that the different contexts they live in would make it harder for the arrogant child to be struck by the exemplar’s humility and hence to develop a desire to emulate them.

As regards self-abasing students, the prospects of the proposed exemplarist’s solution are threatened by the fact that self-abasement negatively affects a child’s perception of what is attainable. In such a scenario, it is key to present students with *ordinary exemplars*—that is, with relevant, but also morally *imperfect* models. For the possibility of seeing them at work in situations familiar to the children and acknowledging both their virtuousness and their flaws would help self-abasing students counteract the distorted perception of the distance between themselves and the exemplar, and develop a motivation to reduce such distance by emulating their behaviour.

Nothing I have maintained so far is meant to provide knock-down arguments on behalf of the exemplarists. Rather, I have attempted to show how an exemplar-based account of moral education can address the limited-applicability problem and make room for auxiliary strategies to foster moral education in less-than-ideal circumstances. In the next section, we shall evaluate whether an exemplar-based account can refute the accusation of indoctrinating children.

### 3. THE PROBLEM OF INDOCTRINATION

It is a shared assumption of most approaches to moral education that indoctrinatory educational strategies should be avoided because they inhibit children’s capacity for moral reflection and thereby deprive them of the necessary abilities to evaluate the goodness of their moral conduct. However, assessing whether an educational model successfully avoids the charge of indoctrination is a complicated matter. For one thing, the solution to the problem of indoctrination substantially depends on what it takes for an educational approach to be indoctrinatory, and that is a highly disputed issue. For another, accounts of moral education are generally accused of being indoctrinatory on the grounds that they care about helping children act well in the moral domain, form morally appropriate beliefs, and develop the appropriate emotional response to morally relevant situations yet overlook the importance of fostering children’s autonomy (e.g., Siegel 2018: §6). In this section, after a brief reconstruction of these issues, I argue that an exemplar-based account can avoid the charge of indoctrination. The following considerations support the thesis that human flourishing requires not only education for moral virtues, but also, and more importantly, education for autonomy and thus for intellectual virtues.

Let us consider the two issues affecting the solution to the problem of indoctrination in accounts of moral education. The first issue concerns the notion of indoctrination: rival

accounts propose different necessary conditions for a practice to be a form of indoctrination. Some hold that indoctrination lies in the methods an educator deploys—namely, in strategies that do not help students to develop their capacity to reason (e.g., Copp 2016; Merry 2005). Others think indoctrination requires teaching of doctrines or false beliefs (e.g., Flew 1972). A third position encompasses those who endorse an intention-based account according to which an educator indoctrinates the students insofar as he or she aims at ensuring that students believe something regardless of the evidence (e.g., Snook 1972). As Callan and Arena (2009) and Taylor (2017) have shown, all these views have problems. Thus, following those scholars, in this paper I endorse an outcome-based account that charges with indoctrination educators whose teaching strategies foster close-mindedness in their students. I cannot offer an argument in support of my choice here, but a detailed analysis of this account, its limits, and its advantages over rival positions can be found in the works just cited. For the purposes of this section, let us assume that for an educational practice to be indoctrinatory it has to have a tendency to produce closed-minded individuals.

The second issue pertains to the aims of moral education, some of which, at first glance, might seem indoctrinatory. For example, an adaptationalist approach to moral education aims at equipping children with the values, beliefs, and practices key to living within their community or society. This approach has been accused of indoctrinating students because *causing* students to develop pro-social behaviours—that is, having them do so closed-mindedly—is compatible with its main goal (Carr 1983: 41–42). The standard approach to virtue formation looks better equipped to avoid this problem, in that for the students to develop a virtue, it is necessary that they exercise their free reason in the form of *phronesis*. Nonetheless, it may still look problematic to concede that some adult or community decides what counts as a virtue on behalf of the young and fosters their acquisition of these character traits. As Siegel points out, these values ‘will have been imposed on students from without, rather than having been embraced from within, on the basis of the students’ own independent judgment’ (2018: 86). Any approach to moral education that ‘fails to foster students’ ability to think critically about morality’ turns out to be indoctrinatory, in that ‘whatever beliefs it imparts, actions it encourages, habits or sentiments it fosters, etc., students so educated will be unable to determine for themselves the worthiness or otherwise of those very beliefs, actions, habits, and so on’ (85–86).

In order to clarify the force of the problem of indoctrination, it is helpful to distinguish two main stages of moral education. In the first stage, young children have not developed their capacity for reflection on moral issues yet and therefore lack autonomy. Thus, presenting them with rival views on moral values and attempting to foster value pluralism amount to neither a promising educational strategy nor a good remedy against indoctrination, for the students lack the resources to grasp reasons in favour and against the various views. As some have recently argued, at this stage it is fundamental to undertake processes of *moral formation*—that is, attempts ‘to bring it about that children subscribe to certain moral standards’ (Hand 2014: 526)—or *moral socialization*, which amounts to teaching children to ‘work cooperatively and to have certain important ‘pro-social’ or morally acceptable attitudes’ (Copp 2016: 155). Put simply, the first goal of moral



education is to teach children to tell the truth, be respectful of other people, handle emotions, avoid cheating or bullying attitudes, and so on.

One might suspect that this is in fact an indoctrinatory strategy, in that it inculcates values in someone who is unable to decide whether they want to endorse those values. On closer look, this kind of moral instruction need not be indoctrinatory, in that it 'is not matter of teaching children to have certain beliefs' (156); rather, it provides children with a basic framework for social interactions and it does not prevent them from developing reflection skills and critical thinking in due course (Merry 2005: 400). In other words, good educators can undertake moral formation without indoctrinating the children if they avoid fostering close-minded attitudes about other approaches and opinions in their students.

The second stage of moral education consists in helping older children understand and think critically about controversial moral issues (Copp 2016: 155), but also about the very same values they have learned in the first stage. Copp calls this process *propositional moral education* to show that the reflective skills students develop within this stage allow them to acquire propositional moral content. Hand terms it *moral inquiry*, a stage in which students are invited to 'consider what reasons there might be for holding themselves and each other to standards of conduct' (2014: 526). Indoctrination might be less of a problem in this stage than it is in the first. For insofar as an educator teaches students to deploy their conceptual apparatus to form their own judgment about moral issues, this strategy helps them strengthen their autonomy and develop critical thinking.

The important question we need to answer is whether an exemplar-based account of moral education runs the risk of indoctrinating the young. I anticipated earlier that my answer would be negative, meaning that this account can achieve its goals without adopting indoctrinatory strategies. The strategy I shall adopt to argue for this thesis requires distinguishing the case of older students from the condition of younger children. In the case of students that are already of the appropriate age to reason about moral exemplarity and virtue, there may be several ways an educator can stimulate these children to critical reflection, but a potentially effective strategy has been recently proposed by Yousra Osman. In the 'Inspire' phase of her pilot study examining a role-modelling character-education project, she provided primary school students aged eleven to twelve with stories of ordinary exemplars and in order to encourage critical thinking asked them, as a first task of the project, to 'brainstorm what virtues they think the role model presents before the teacher defines them' (2019: xxx). An important advantage of this solution is that it allows children to form their own judgments before getting acquainted with the teacher's definition of a virtue, thereby reducing the possibility that instruction turns out to be indoctrinatory. Obviously, this solution can only apply to students who are already able to engage in critical reflection and moral inquiry; thus, exemplarists still need to explain how they manage to educate younger children to virtue without indoctrinating them.

In the case of younger students, an exemplarist reply to the objection of indoctrination needs to address both the stage of moral socialization and the stage of moral inquiry. As regards the former, the exemplar-based account incurs a smaller risk of indoctrinating the students than other models of virtue formation in that it reduces the amount of direct instruction to mere provision of minimum vocabulary for the students to understand virtue terms. In this approach, most moral socialization amounts to presenting children with

ordinary exemplars to admire and emulate rather than with rules to follow and actions to perform over and over on the grounds that this is what good children do.

A more serious concern arises as soon as young students are able to grasp moral propositional content and therefore undertake moral inquiry. One might in fact think the proponent of an exemplar-based model is committed to giving up on the exemplarist dynamic in the stage of moral inquiry and endorsing another approach, one that fosters autonomy and critical thinking. I shall resist this idea and show that critical thinking can be fostered through the exemplarist dynamic. My argument involves two steps: first, I shall highlight that the exemplarist dynamic requires conscientious reflection; then, I shall argue that the exemplarist dynamic itself can foster the necessary skills that help reflection and allow students to develop critical thinking.

The first step is quite straightforward. As we have seen in section 1, developing and deploying conscientious reflection in evaluating an exemplar's admirability and virtuousness is a necessary requirement of the exemplarist dynamic. Inculcating moral values through admiration and imitation of virtuous exemplars may provide young children with pro-social attitudes, but the overall effectiveness of the approach rests on the students' conscientiousness and thus on their critical-thinking skills. Hence, the important question becomes: how can critical thinking be developed in an exemplar-based educational approach? The answer I propose is that in the stage of moral inquiry, the educator helps children develop the necessary conceptual resources to undertake their own moral assessments, namely intellectual virtues, through the exemplarist dynamic. In principle, there seems to be no reason why the exemplar-based model should not apply to intellectual character traits. As Zagzebski suggests, 'Epistemic admiration plays an important role in acquiring intellectual virtues.... We find certain persons and certain epistemic behaviors admirable and we learn to think critically and carefully, to be open-minded, intellectually fair, and persevering by imitating persons who have those traits' (2012: 90).

The plausibility of this approach to moral inquiry rests on two important points, namely whether intellectual virtues can provide children with critical thinking and whether providing intellectual-virtue formation via an exemplar-based method avoids the problem of indoctrination. I suggest we can respond to both questions in the affirmative. As regards the former question, on Siegel's view critical thinking includes two components: the reason-assessment component (henceforth RAC), involving skills and abilities to evaluate the epistemic strength of reasons for an action, a belief, or a judgment, and the critical-spirit component (henceforth CSC), involving dispositions, habits, and character traits that allow one to be disposed to reason assessment and be guided by it in action, belief, and judgment (e.g., 2018: 21). Siegel admits that intellectual virtues feature in the constituents of CSC, in that they are dispositions to obtain epistemic goods, including those concerning the development of a critical spirit. Jason Baehr has recently shown that for two reasons intellectual virtues also require that RAC be satisfied. First, possessing intellectual virtues requires that the subject be able to judge when to engage in activities relevant for that virtue. For example, an open-minded person has the competence to assess reasons in favour of and against considering a competing standpoint. Second, having intellectual virtues requires that the subject aptly and successfully exert the intellectual activity characteristic of that virtue. For example, an intellectually careful individual forms correct

epistemic judgments, while an intellectually courageous one makes their voice heard in the appropriate circumstances (2019). Whatever are the necessary intellectual virtues to possess for one to display critical-thinking skills, we can conclude that fostering these character traits puts students in a good position to become critical thinkers.

If this is the case, then a positive answer to the second question follows from this point. For educating the students for open-mindedness, thoroughness, inquisitiveness, and so on amounts to a powerful remedy against indoctrination. Thus, the only way an educational approach that successfully promotes critical thinking can be indoctrinatory is by indoctrinating children in critical thinking and hence in the intellectual virtues. But as we have already argued, an exemplar-based educational model incurs a limited risk of being indoctrinatory because the exemplarist dynamic allows children to develop the virtues in a way that suits their emotional and cognitive needs.

It goes without saying that even intellectual-virtues formation through an exemplar-based approach requires that an educator support the exemplarist dynamic with auxiliary strategies providing opportunities for the students to understand how intellectual virtues concretely work as well as to practice virtuous behaviour. Baehr has offered insightful examples of how we can help children develop virtuous habits in classroom settings. Besides thinking of activities that could allow small groups of students to cooperate in a collective inquiry (that is, a fruitful context in which a lot of opportunities for exercising intellectual virtues arise), an educator can implement ‘thinking routines’ in the classroom’s ordinary activities—that is, ‘a pedagogical tool for facilitating the practice of intellectual virtues’ (2015: 380). Among the routines are the ‘What Makes You Say That?’ routine and the ‘Circle of Viewpoints’ one. The former helps children strengthen virtues of self-reflection—such as intellectual carefulness, thoroughness, and intellectual humility—by giving the teacher and the classmates the opportunity to address this question to a student who is talking. The latter consists in exploring different perspectives on a given subject matter with the goals of developing open-mindedness and attaining a deep understanding of the issue at stake.

Let us take stock and summarize how we have answered the main question raised in this section, namely whether an exemplar-based account of moral education indoctrinates young students. The answer included two main situations, namely one in which an educator undertakes a process of moral education with children able to grasp moral concepts and another in which students are unable to do so because of their young age. In the first case, an educator who fosters moral virtues following the exemplarist dynamic can avoid the charge of indoctrination by giving the necessary attention to the reflection phase of the process—that is, by making sure the dynamic does not lead students to develop close-minded attitudes towards people with different viewpoints or alternative education backgrounds. In the second case, an educator should first undertake a process of moral formation aimed at increasing the students’ familiarity with virtuous behaviour and the vocabulary of virtue and later propose a stage of moral inquiry, in which students are led to form moral judgments by being exposed to exemplars of intellectual virtues and being offered opportunities to develop and practice critical thinking. In addition to both situations, an educator can stimulate practice of virtuous behaviour in the students by proposing tools and activities such as the ones suggested by Baehr. This way, the risk of

indoctrinating them is minimal because fostering critical thinking amounts to helping children develop those skills that counteract the formation of close-minded attitudes. Thus, we can conclude that an exemplar-based account of moral education has the resources to provide moral-virtue formation without being indoctrinatory.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The analysis I pursued in this paper was meant to assess the potential of an exemplar-based account of moral education within the current debate in moral education. Because of length constraints, I had to limit my inquiry to two specific issues, which I called the limited-applicability problem and the problem of indoctrination. I attempted to show how an exemplarist model can address both issues without giving up on its core educational strategy, namely the exemplarist dynamic. More could be said—in fact, should be said—about the educational potential of this approach, for example regarding the role of teachers as role models (e.g., Tuninetti 2018), the effectiveness of nudging children through narratives (e.g., Engelen et al. 2018) and educating them to intellectual virtue through exemplars, and the educational function of negative or vicious exemplars.<sup>v</sup> I wish further papers will soon explore these and other issues relevant for an exemplarist approach to moral education, and I hope this paper has contributed to the growing debate.<sup>vi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> For further definitions of EMT’s key moral terms, see Zagzebski (2017: §1.5).

<sup>ii</sup> More on the rationality of trusting our admiration upon reflection can be found in Zagzebski (2012: §4; 2017: §2.5).

<sup>iii</sup> For a more detailed list of merits of direct instruction, see Baehr (2015: 306–11).

<sup>iv</sup> See, e.g., Carr and Harrison (2015) and Osman (2019).

<sup>v</sup> Some of these topics are discussed in other contributions to this special issue.

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